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Spill in a Board Room

CIA Chief Admits He Leaked Report on Ties to Newsmen

Associated Press

Outgoing CIA Director William E. Colby, who consistently has condemned leaks of intelligence secrets, has acknowledged that he was the anonymous source of the first news story exposing the extent of agency contacts with journalists.

"I did tell them, yes," Colby said in reference to The Washington Star, which revealed in November 1973 that journalists were doubling as CIA contacts.

ASKED specifically if he was the "authoritative source" who revealed to the Star that the CIA had some three dozen American journalists working abroad on its payroll, Colby replied, "I don't want to confirm it, but you're not far off."

During an interview yesterday, Colby said, "I certainly have made leaks. I certainly have made mistakes. Excuse me, not leaks. I've made mistakes in what I said."

Asked about the Nov. 30, 1973, Star

story headlined "Journalists Doubling as CIA Contacts," Colby said "that particular story came from a discussion . . . with the (Star) editorial board and the question was asked whether we had any relationships with journalists. . . . I felt that I had to speak straight with the people on the editorial board, that I couldn't be in the position of telling them something false. So in the process I did tell them, yes."

SITTING IN his office on the top floor of CIA headquarters, Colby said that the agency has stopped using full-time journalists as undercover agents but that it continues to maintain contact with free-lance reporters abroad who might sell their stories to American news organizations.

Colby said he doubted that the management of any news organization was aware which free-lance reporters were cooperating with the CIA.